

## **EVIDENCE OF COLLABORATION REGARDING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND EXTENDED SERVICES**

### **Provision of Supported Employment Services**

The Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has a long standing inter-agency agreement with the Medicaid State Agency, the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS), Division of Disability and Elder Services (DDES), Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services to jointly fund projects for individuals with developmental disabilities who are interested in and need supported employment services.

A similar collaborative agreement was established with the DHFS/DDES, Bureau of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services to promote supported employment for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. In this partnership, innovation and expansion projects funded through June 2007 were awarded to three counties. These projects focus on establishing team-based supported employment services and targeted case management within community support programs (CSPs). The CSPs are able to provide long-term vocational supports following DVR case closure.

The collaborative funded projects develop and test more effective models for providing supported employment in an environment of increased demand for these services and diminishing availability of funds for extended services. As a result of the success of the natural support projects, DVR and provider staff are trained to focus on the establishment of natural, as opposed to paid, supports from the outset of the supported employment planning process.

In FFY 06, the DSA/DSU and WRC co-hosted a long term employment supports summit meeting for key stakeholder agencies and community partners with the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. In FFY '06 and '07 the DSU will continue collaborative efforts through an inter-organizational post-summit workgroup to identify and deploy systems change strategies that more adequately address the needs of persons in need of continuing employment supports.

### **Provision of Extended Services**

Wisconsin DVR has, through its local offices, working relationships regarding extended services for supported employment with most of the counties in the state. Most have processes in place to assure the extended services for individuals to be served in supported employment. These procedures have been formulated locally and therefore are unique to each county and local VR office in terms of resources and opportunities.

These activities have significantly increased the number of consumers placed successfully in supported employment in Wisconsin during the last decade.

The increased demand for supported employment coupled with significant budget reductions has forced counties to reduce and/or limit the number of consumers for which they agree to provide extended services while in supported employment.

To address these problems Wisconsin DVR provided policy guidance to staff to help them identify new and appropriate extended support resources. This guidance has been circulated statewide and has improved compliance with the Rehabilitation Act. The guidance paper includes a decision tree to enable counselors and their local partners to assure that individuals have adequate opportunities for community work experiences to assess their ongoing support needs and to explore all possible sources of ongoing support.

Wisconsin DVR also enters into cooperative and/or collaborative agreements to help identify new extended resources for supported employment. In addition DVR will continue to work with state, county and local agencies to explore and identify new funding sources and mechanisms to increase the ability of counties to provide extended services. Wisconsin DVR currently has several collaborative projects that are developing and testing expanded and innovative patterns of natural supports for employees in need of on-going employment supports.

**Public Comment:** There is a disconnect between DVR and DHFS for supported employment. Job Centers are focusing on "premiere employers. We are very concerned about the decline in supported employment. Can DVR and DHFS talk and solve this?

**Response:** DVR and DHFS leadership are also concerned with the decline in financial support in many communities for supported employment services. DVR and DHFS leadership have formed an interagency workgroup to focus on systemic solutions to long term employment supports. The two agencies in collaboration with other key stakeholder partners will continue to work on long-term solutions to the problem.